



City of Austin

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Sustaining Austin's Natural Preserve System

*SD23: Health & Environment, Economic Opportunity & Affordability, Safety,
Culture and Lifelong Learning*

Austin Preserve System is a Critical Ecological Asset

- Austin's 2,500-acre preserve system is a critical part of the city's park system, protecting endangered species habitat, unique natural features, and prime tracts of ecosystem unique to the region. There are 15 preserves across the city ¹.
- Austin's preserves system suffers from perennial underfunding and from lack of long-term planning, which results in a **lack of wildfire management**, endangers the sustainability of the system, and results in a lack of true community engagement and participation.
- Employing a full-time **Environmental Manager** to oversee the system – for an ongoing investment of **\$95,000** – to initiate a wildfire and land management plan and coordinate with Austin Fire Department and Austin Water Utility for prescribed burns, will ensure the safety of surrounding communities and the sustainability of the system.

Establishing Land Management Plans for Austin's Preserves System for \$120,000

- A one-time investment of **\$120,000** for a Preserves Land Management Plan will provide an overall guiding document with assessments for each of the 15 preserves, providing an individualized approach for unique assets.
- As the City Auditor noted in the August 2019 audit on [Wildfire Preparedness](#), the city is advised to "Create land management plans for Parks and Recreation Department high-risk properties," which include the preserves land.
- Emma Long Metropolitan Park, while not a "preserve," is included in the list for city-owned parcels requiring land management plans as it both lacks a master plan and is at high wildfire risk along with the other preserves.
- A Preserves Management Plan with the individual assessments can be leveraged by the local non-profits for fundraising efforts and national grants.

Table 1. List of Preserves

Preserve	District	Acres
Barrow	10	7
Barton Creek Wilderness Park	8	1,106
Big Walnut Creek	1	43
William H. Russell Karst Preserve (Blowing Sink)	8	167
Blunn Creek	9	38
Colorado River Wildlife Sanctuary	3	43
Decker Tallgrass Prairie	1	347
Deer Park at Maple Run	8	24
Goat Cave Karst	8	8
Indiangrass Wildlife Sanctuary	1	290
Mayfield	10	22
Onion Creek Wildlife Sanctuary	Adjacent to D2	173
Stephenson	5	147
Stillhouse Hollow	10	20
Zilker Nature	8	77
Emma Long Metropolitan Park*	10	1,142
Total		2,512*

Source: Parks & Recreation [Preserves Overview](#)

*The preserves acreage total does not include Emma Long Metro Park, since the park is not classified as a "preserve." However, the park lacks a management plan and is at high wildfire risk similar to the rest of Austin's preserves.

¹ Parks & Recreation [Preserves Overview](#)

Preserves Experience and Infrastructure Improvements

- A one-time investment of **\$100,000** will create a better experience for each preserve through interpretive signage, wayfinding, entrances, and fencing to direct visitors to access points.
- These enhancements include nature activities such as bird blinds and improved trails through the Texas Civilian Conservation Corps.

Table 2. FY20 Investment Totals

Investment	One-Time	Ongoing
Preserves Land Management Plan	\$120,000	
Preserves Infrastructure Improvements	\$100,000	
Environmental Manager		\$95,000
Totals	\$220,000	\$95,000